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LAURA BRIDGMAN.

THE history of Laura Bridgman throws so much light on the whole subject of education, that we propose to continue, in this number of the Journal, the account of that remarkable child, as we find it in Dr. Howe's Appendix to the annual report of the Trustees of the Perkins Institution for the Blind. Her previous history we have given in the preceding volumes of this work.

Perhaps it may be safely said that no other child has ever become so "world-famous," (as Carlyle would express it,) at her age. Yet how unconscious is she of her own celebrity! She is an object of sympathy and wonder to numberless persons, in every part of the civilized world; and yet she knows as little of the hearts that, from distant lands, turn towards her with affection, as does a beautiful flower know of its admirers. What curious speculations might grow out of the supposition that a race of spiritual beings, as much superior to us in knowledge, and in their powers of perception and communication, as we are to this tongueless, eyeless, earless child, is now looking upon each one of us with the intense interest with which we look upon her, making our glimmering perceptions of truth and duty a theme of high and heavenly philosophy, and pondering upon our temptation or our immunity, our elevation or our fall, even as we speculate and moralize upon the conduct of this little girl! But we cannot pursue this train of meditation, which some may consider a vagary of the fancy, others a glimpse of the truth.

The history of Laura is more important than that of a rabble of common kings. Her case throws light upon questions which for ages have been subjects of controversy,—of positive but contradictory assertion;—we do not say of *doubt*, for as yet there has been comparatively little of *doubt* in the world. Mankind will *doubt* much more when they come to *know* more.

For instance, philosophers of no mean rank have held that language, or the possession of a system of words significant of things, must have been bestowed upon man by a miracle,—communicated by a special revelation from Heaven. They have held that man was not created with the faculty of framing or coining words, and of perfecting these words into a language; and therefore, if a special interposition of Providence had not conferred this gift, that he would hardly have surpassed the brutes in his power of using vocal signs to express his mental operations. The phenomena of this case seem to settle the question, if any doubt could exist respecting it, that the capacity to frame a sys-

tem of arbitrary vocal signs for the expression of our ideas, is one of the original gifts of Heaven,—a gift so noble as to impose upon us the deepest responsibility for the manner in which it is used. This is only one of many cases where narrow-mindedness has accounted for particular blessings by supposing them to be particular favors from above, but which philosophy has afterwards shown to be universal gifts, and innate in the whole race ; and of course proving as much greater benevolence in the Creator, as the whole is greater than a part.

By studying Laura's history attentively, the teacher will obtain a practical lesson of the utmost importance. He will see how much more progress can be made with any pupil, if he begins rightly and teaches thoroughly. In teaching Laura, Dr. Howe began and continued by exhibiting the thing or quality itself, whenever he gave her a name ; or by referring to it in such a manner, if it respected any thing not material, that she would understand the meaning ; that is, he constantly assured himself that the child had an idea for every word she learned. By this means the foundation was laid for that remarkable success and rapidity which have attended all the subsequent stages of her progress. It is of inappreciable value in teaching, to secure exactness and precision of idea, to be certain that the learner's mind distinctly sees different things as different things, instead of seeing one shapeless blur standing for the whole. And the value of this mode is increased just in proportion to the earliness of the stage at which it is adopted. No fidelity in all subsequent teaching can ever wholly atone for a neglect in this particular at the beginning. Teachers often seem to act upon the supposition that they get along faster if they elude difficulties, and suffer imperfections to go uncorrected ; but what is such progress worth, however rapid it may appear to be ? No doubt, the wheels of machinery will revolve more swiftly if no stock is undergoing the process of manufacture by their motion ; but of what profit is such speed ? The most miserable of all excuses is, that the teacher has not time to teach well ; that is, that he has not time to do the only thing he is employed for. Had Dr. Howe reasoned thus, and acted thus, in regard to Laura, her soul would never have shone out through its opake envelopment, as it now does, beautiful as a light placed within a vase of alabaster.

In another respect, Laura's case is original. We do not mean that individuals have never before lived, who, like her, have been bereft of what may be called the cardinal senses ; but we mean that, before the present instance, the two circumstances have never been combined, where a teacher of such sagacious and philosophic views has found such a child upon whom to test some of the questions most interesting to humanity.

The susceptibility of children to receive impressions from others is so strong that we tire ingenuity to find comparisons, by which to make the fact sufficiently obvious and palpable. We compare the young mind to clay in the hand of the potter, which he moulds into whatsoever shape he pleases. It is wax ready to receive any impression which may have been graved upon the seal. It is a precious stone in the hands of the lapidary ; marble under the chisel of the sculptor ; canvass, ere it is beautified or made frightful by the painter's brush, &c. &c. Children are also so prone to imitate whatever they see in

others, that we hardly deem it a figurative, and certainly not a hyperbolic, expression, to say that *they are the creatures of imitation*, as though this were the only source of all their conduct.

But these views are but partially correct. In all ordinary cases, there are two distinct forces, whose united strength makes up human character;—the force of nature, and the force of education. The source of the former is internal; it is the innate tendencies of nature working outwards; but, on the other hand, the source of the latter is external; it is education, (and by this we mean the aggregate of all external influences.)—a force coming from without meeting and modifying the tendencies of nature from within, sometimes overcoming them, sometimes overcome by them. But in all cases it is the union of two streams, coming from opposite fountains, that fills the channel of life with good or evil; and, after they have united, no human being can tell how much of the current originally belonged to one of the fountains, and how much to the other.

Perhaps we might express this idea to the mathematician, more clearly, in another form. Human action is represented by a diagonal line. Nature and education are the two propelling forces which meet each other as they come from different points. Which side of the parallelogram should be drawn longest, to measure or represent the greater of the two forces, an intelligent observer may, perhaps, in the majority of cases, determine; but no finite mind can tell, with exactness, what relation, in regard to length, the two should bear to each other; that is, how much the energy of nature has overcome education, or how much education has turned nature aside, and caused her to diverge from her original course.

But here is a being upon whom, until her arrival at a considerable age, one only of these forces operated, viz., that of nature. Her mind had a susceptibility of receiving impressions, it is true, but the avenues of sense being blocked up, few, very few impressions were made upon it; and, from the necessity of the case, she was almost wholly deprived of the power of imitation, for she had neither eyes nor ears, by which she could know what others were doing or saying.

In regard to other children, what we may call the current,—or the force of nature,—sets one way, and bears the vessel of life along on its bosom; but the wind which fills its sails,—or education,—sets another way, and the course of the voyage is the result of the two forces combined;—each, to some extent, modifying the other, for perhaps there is no case where nature and education exactly coincide and propel their object in precisely the same direction. This child, however, may be said to have been borne along on the current, and almost without any disturbing force.

In this point of view, then, how cheering and delightful it is to witness her *conscientiousness*,—her intuitive perception of what is right, her invariable and scrupulous adherence to truth! The world has been infested with a school of philosophers, so called, one of whose dogmas it was, that there is no rule of right; that there are no fixed principles of duty, in the nature of things, as God has constituted them. They have held and taught, that all our notions respecting equity, and justice, and honor, and compassion, were conventional, arbitrary, capricious; that there was no original faculty in the human soul which preferred



truth to falsehood, fidelity to perfidy, and positively adjudged the former to be superior to the latter; that each generation may make its own laws of benevolence or duty, which any succeeding generation may repeal; and that the great obligations which are acknowledged by all to exist in some form, have no inflexible, immutable, immortal standard, in the moral constitution of the human soul. But out of the living reality of this child's nature, God has perfected praise. She exhibits sentiments of conscientiousness, of the love of truth, of gratitude, of affection, which education never gave to her. She bestows upon mankind, evidences of purity, and love, and faith, which she never received from them. It is not repayment, for they were not borrowed. They were not copied from the creature, but given by the Creator.

If she had possessed the senses of other children, and of course received the education of other children, there is no reason to doubt that she would have been as selfish and as deceptive as they. Were other children shrouded from the knowledge and example of artifice, of prevarication, of subterfuge, of dissimulation, of hypocrisy, of fraud, in all its thousand forms, as she has been, what reason have we to suppose that, as a general rule, they would not be as just, ingenuous, and truthful as she is? What a lesson to parents and teachers!

Her affection and her unsullied purity of soul are traits of the most exquisite loveliness. For charms like these, wealth might cheaply barter all its ornaments, and knowledge all its powers of display.

How delightful, too, is her confidence,—her trustfulness,—believing as literal truth every thing which is told her, and giving life and reality even to the fictions which are related for her instruction!

But perhaps the most striking trait developed in her moral character, certainly one of the most edifying, in a world like this, full of intolerance, and reproach, and persecution, is her charity for the motives and conduct of others. She could hardly be made to believe that another had done wrong; indeed, she could not be made to believe it, until the faith which she reposed in her teacher neutralized and cancelled the faith which she had before in human nature generally. She insists upon it, that forgetfulness, not premeditation, is the cause of falsehood or delinquency. The record below is not the only instance of this. Often, when cases of misconduct have been presented to her, and she has been asked whether they were not wrong, her quick reply has been, "He forgot," as though her nature were as averse to imputing wrong to others as to committing it herself. Has the divine spirit of charity for our fellow-men ever taken a more heavenly form, since the declaration of Christ in regard to his crucifiers,—*They know not what they do?*

But we must not detain our readers longer from Dr. Howe's report, although reflections suggested by this interesting case come thronging to our mind.

In closing our remarks, we cannot forbear to say, that the good fortune of bringing such a subject and such a teacher together cannot be over-estimated. It is true that cases have heretofore existed, where individuals like Laura have been deprived of the most important instruments of communication with other minds, and with the whole external world; and such cases may exist again. But it has never before happened that any such case has fallen under the care and su-

pervision of a man whose sound philosophy and practical benevolence fitted him to make it available for the purpose of throwing light upon some of the most interesting problems of humanity; and had this occasion passed unimproved, no one can tell how long the world must have waited for the occurrence of another opportunity. It is most gratifying to reflect, that, under the labors of Dr. Howe, not only has this beautiful spirit been taken from the darkness in which it was enveloped, and brought into the light of a gladsome existence; but that, under the guidance of the same hand, the same thing has been done, though to a less extent, in regard to thousands of others. The condition, the fortunes, the character, the happiness of the blind, for all time to come, will be improved and elevated by the labors of this one benefactor. How well and how extensively has he effected the grand object of all human effort,—*to make men suffer less and enjoy more!*

#### DR. HOWE'S REPORT.

This interesting child has continued through the past year to make rapid progress in the acquisition of knowledge. She seems, indeed, to advance, in a geometrical ratio, for every step which she takes aids her in that which is to follow. She has now become so well acquainted with language that she can comprehend and use all the parts of speech; and, although her vocabulary is still very small, it is so perfectly familiar as to be to her exactly what speech is to others,—the vehicle for thought. She labored, for a long time, under a difficulty like that experienced by persons learning a foreign language; she had to make an effort to recall the sign with which she was to associate an idea; but now, the association is not only spontaneous and immediate, but, as with others, apparently necessary. As, when we see an object,—a house, or a dog,—we invariably think of the words *house*, *dog*,—so every thing with which Laura comes in contact is instantly suggestive of its name in her finger language.

Moreover, every thought that flashes through our minds is so intimately associated with language as to seem inseparable from it; for, although it is true that we do not always embody the thought in language, yet we think of the words; and when we are intently engaged or interested, then we are apt to express the emotion by an audible sign,—by words. A person looking earnestly for any thing that is lost, on suddenly finding it, will think of the words, "I've found it," or, "Here it is," or, "How glad I am!" and perhaps he will utter them aloud. So with Laura, I doubt not that every thought instantly and spontaneously suggests the finger language,—the signs with which it is associated; for if she be intently engaged by herself, her fingers are moving, and, as it were, mechanically forming the letters, though so swift and fleeting are the motions that no eye can trace them. I have often arrested her when thus soliloquizing, and asked her to tell me distinctly what she had been saying to herself; and she has laughed, and sometimes said, "*I cannot remember*;" at other times, by a strong mental effort, she has recalled the fleeting thoughts, and repeated them slowly. Visitors are sometimes amazed that her teachers can read the words as she forms them on her fingers; for so swift and varied are the motions, that they can see them only as they

see indistinctly the spokes of a wheel in rapid motion ; but, as by increase of motion, those separate spokes disappear, or are seen but as one, so do the motions of Laura's fingers, when she is talking rapidly to herself, become confused and illegible even to those most conversant with them.

Another proof of the spontaneous connection between her thoughts and these arbitrary signs is the fact that, when asleep, and disturbed by dreams, her fingers are at work, and doubtless uttering her thoughts irregularly, as we murmur them indistinctly in broken slumbers.

Some philosophers have supposed that speech, or the utterance of thought by vocal signs, was a human invention,—a selection by man's wisdom of this particular form of communicating thought, in preference to any other form, as that of motions of the hand, fingers, &c.; and they suppose that a community might be formed with a valuable language, and yet without an audible sound. The phenomena presented by deaf mutes, however, contradict this supposition, if I rightly understand them. So strong seems the tendency to utter vocal sounds, that Laura uses them for different persons of her acquaintance whom she meets, having a distinct sound for each one. When, after a short absence, she goes into the sitting-room, where there are a dozen blind girls, she embraces them by turns, uttering rapidly, and in a high key, the peculiar sound which designates each one ; and so different are they, that any of the blind girls can tell whom she is with. Now, if she were talking about these very girls to a third person, she would make the sign for them on her fingers without hesitation ; yet I am inclined to believe that the thought of their vocal sign occurs first, and is translated, as it were, into the finger language, because, when she is alone, she sometimes utters these sounds or names of persons. She said to me, indeed, in answer to a question, why she uttered a certain sound rather than spelled the name, "*I think of Jennette's noise,—many times, when I think how she give me good things ; I do not think to spell her name.*" At another time, hearing her, in the next room, make the peculiar sound for Jennette, I hastened to her, and asked her why she made it ; she said, "*Because I think how she do love me much, and I love her very much.*"

This is not inconsistent with the opinion which I advanced at first, that she associates her thought *immediately* with finger language ; it only shows that the natural tendency of the human mind is to express thought by some kind of symbol ; that audible signs by the vocal organs are the first which suggest themselves ; but that, where this avenue is blocked up, the natural tendency or inclination will be gratified in some other way.

I do not doubt that I could have trained Laura to express her thoughts, to a considerable extent, by vocal signs ; but it would have been a most rude and imperfect language ; it would have been indeed a foolish attempt to do, in a few years, what it took the human race generations and ages to effect.

Some persons, who are familiar with teaching the deaf mutes, have expressed their opinion that Laura already uses language with greater ease and precision than children who have about the same degree of knowledge, but who are merely deaf and dumb. I believe this is true ; and it confirms what I think might be inferred *a priori*, viz., that the finger language should be used as much as possible, in teach-



ing the mutes, rather than the natural signs, or pantomime. I am aware that I am treading on delicate ground ; that the subject involves very nice metaphysical considerations, and has an important bearing upon the whole subject of deaf-mute instruction, of which I by no means pretend to be a competent judge ; nevertheless, I trust I shall not be deemed presumptuous, if I throw out such thoughts as Laura's case has suggested, in the hope that they may be of some service to others.

The language of natural signs is swift in the conveyance of meaning ; a glance or a gesture will transmit thought with lightning-like speed, that leaves spoken language a laggard behind. It is susceptible, too, of great improvement, and, when highly cultivated, can express almost every variety of the actor's thought, and call up every emotion in the beholder's mind ; it is like man in his wild state, simple, active, strong, and wielding a club ; but spoken language, subtle, flexible, minute, precise, is a thousand times more efficient and perfect instrument for thought ; it is like civilized man, adroit, accomplished, well-trained, and armed with a rapier.

But it is too late to discuss the comparative merit of vocal language, and the language of natural signs, or pantomime ; all the world, except the deaf mutes, use the first ; the mutes are clearly in the minority, and must yield ; the majority will not talk to them in the language of natural signs ; they must, therefore, make themselves as familiar as possible with arbitrary language, in order to commune with other minds ; and to enable them to have this familiar communion, is, I believe, the principal object aimed at in all good schools for the deaf and dumb. But it is a fact that deaf mutes, after they leave school, are not inclined to use the manual alphabet, or to make sentences in common language ; they prefer to express themselves by natural signs, *because they are suggested immediately by the thought*. If a deaf mute wishes to say to you, *He is my friend*, he hooks his two fingers together ; the thought of his friend instantly and spontaneously connects itself with this sign ; and if he is obliged to express it to you, he can do so only by *translating* this sign into the finger language, and spelling the words, *He is my friend*. Now, this ought not to be so ; the finger language should be so familiar to him, so perfectly vernacular, that his thoughts will spontaneously clothe themselves in it. Why are words in the finger language so familiarly connected with thought by Laura Bridgman ? because she could use but few natural signs, or but little pantomime, and she has been prevented from using, even by her teachers, that little, so that the current of her thoughts, forced in a different direction, has worn for itself a channel, in which it flows naturally and smoothly.

I understand that the educated deaf mutes, generally, are little disposed to talk in alphabetic language ; that there are very few of them who, after they leave school, make much use of it ; and that, moreover, they are not fond of reading, although they have learned to read, and understand what they read, pretty well. This last fact is one which is lamented, I believe, by all teachers of mutes ; but it seems to me to be the natural consequence of the mode of their instruction. Common children learn a spoken language from their mothers, brothers and sisters, and companions ; and it becomes their vernacular. They go to school, and learn to substitute for these audible signs certain printed

characters, so that, when they see them, they shall suggest the audible signs ; that is, they learn to read ; but they never read with pleasure until the sight of the printed words suggests easily, and without effort, the audible signs. Persons who have learned to read, late in life, or who are little accustomed to read, pronounce every word aloud as they go along ; if they are a little familiar with reading, they merely move the lips without uttering the audible signs ; and it is only when very familiar with the mechanical process, that the eye glances along the page, and the mind takes in the sense rapidly ; but even then it is doubtful if the sight of a word, for instance, *horse*, does not immediately suggest the audible sound, rather than the picture of the animal. At any rate, it is very important that a familiar use of the written signs of audible sounds should be had early in life, in order that reading may be pleasant or profitable afterwards.

Now, deaf-mute children, of their own accord, make a few natural signs ; they learn some other from imitation, and thus form a rude language, which, on going to school, is amplified and systematized, and which is used with their companions and teachers, until it becomes their vernacular. They learn, at the same time, to use common language in their classes ; that is, they learn to read, to write, and to make sentences by spelling words with their fingers ; *but this does not become to them vernacular* ; they are like seeing children learning a foreign language ; they read, write, and speak in it to their teacher, but the moment they are out of school, they resort to the language of natural signs,—of pantomime. When they go away from school, they will not speak in the arbitrary language of signs any more than common children will speak in French, when they can make themselves understood by others ; they will not read common books any more than other children, imperfectly acquainted with French, will read in French books. Now, as, to oblige a common child to learn French, I would place him in circumstances where he would be required to use it continually, so I would place the dumb child in such circumstances that he would be obliged to use the finger alphabet, writing and reading, until the language should become to him *vernacular* ;—until the thought of a *horse*, for instance, should instantly be associated in his mind, not with the motion of his two fore-fingers imitating the ears of the animal, but with the word *horse*. Laura has been thus placed by nature ; were she only deaf and dumb, she would learn from imitation many natural signs, and use them ; but, being blind, she cannot see them, and her teachers carefully abstain from giving her any.

Doubtless, had she not come so early under instruction, she would have formed a number of natural signs ; and probably these would have been an obstacle to her progress in learning arbitrary signs. Her little companion in misfortune, Oliver Caswell, was twelve years old when he came under instruction ; he had begun to use natural signs ; and it is pretty clear that the possession of them, by enabling him to express a few of his wants, lessens his eagerness to acquire the arbitrary signs by which Laura expresses her thoughts so clearly. He, however, begins to perceive the usefulness of the arbitrary signs, and is every day asking of Laura and of others the names of things.

I shall first give an account of what may be called her physical condition, and its attendant phenomena. She has had almost uninter-



rupted health, and has grown in stature and strength. She is now tall for her age, well-proportioned, and very strong and active. The acuteness of her touch, and of the sense of feeling generally, has increased sensibly during the last year. She can perceive when any one touches a piano in the same room with her; she says, "*Sound comes through the floor to my feet, and up to my head.*" She recognizes her friends by the slightest touch of their hands, or of their dress. For instance, she never fails to notice when I have changed my coat, though it be for one of the same cut, color, and cloth;—if it is only a little more or less worn than the usual one, she perceives it, and asks, "*Why?*" It would appear that in these perceptions she employs not only the sense of touch, but derives great assistance from what Brown would call a sixth sense, viz., the sense of muscular resistance. Aided by both of these, she has acquired surprising facility in ascertaining the situation and relation of things around her. Especially is it curious to see how accurate is her perception of the direction or bearing of objects from her; for by much practice and observation she has attained, to some extent, what the bee and some other insects have in such perfection by instinct,—the power of going straight towards a given point, without any guide or landmark. For instance, when she is told to go from any part of the room to a particular door or window, she goes directly and confidently on, not groping, or feeling the walls; she stops at the right instant, raises her hand in the right direction, and places it upon the door-knob, or whatever point she may have aimed at. Of course, it is not supposed that she can exercise this power when she is in a new place, but that she has attained great facility in ascertaining her actual position in regard to external things.

I am inclined to think that this power is much more common than is usually supposed, and that man has the desire and the capacity of knowing all the relations of *outness*, (to use a word of Berkeley,) so strongly marked as almost to deserve the name of a primitive faculty. The first impulse on waking in the morning, is to ascertain where we are; and, although the effort to ascertain it may not be apparent in common cases, yet, let a person be turned around when he is asleep, and see how instantaneously on waking he looks about to ascertain his position; or, if he is lying awake in the dark, and his bed should be turned round, see how difficult it would be for him to go to sleep without stretching out his hand to feel the wall, or something by which the desire in question may be gratified. Swing a boy round till he is dizzy; look at a girl stopping giddy from the waltz; or a person who has been playing blind man's buff, and has just raised the handkerchief, and mark how, by holding the head, as if to steady it, and eagerly looking around, the first and involuntary effort of each one is to ascertain the relations of *outness*. If it has ever occurred to the reader to fall asleep lying on his back, with his arms crossed under his head, and to have them *get asleep*, or become benumbed, he will recollect his consternation on waking, at the thought that his arms were cut off; and his strange sensation, when by a violent effort he has raised himself, and the two limbs fall dead and lead-like upon his thighs; that sensation, then, confined to the arms, if extended all over the body, would be the one we should have if the nerves upon the surface of the body gave us no impression in regard to external things, even of the

atmosphere. Who could be easy a moment if he had no notion of what he was sitting or standing upon, or any perception or idea of being supported and surrounded by material objects?

Laura, (or any blind child,) if taken up in a person's arms, carried into a strange room, and placed in a chair, could not resist the inclination to stretch out her hands, and ascertain, by feeling, the relations of space and objects about her. In walking in the street, she endeavors to learn all she can of the nature of the ground she is treading on; but she gives herself up generally to her leader, clinging very closely to her. I have sometimes, in play, or to note the effect, suddenly dropped her hand when she was in a strange place, and started out of her reach, at which she manifested, not fear, but bewilderment and perplexity.

I have said she measures distances very accurately; and this she seems to do principally by the aid of what Brown calls the sixth sense, or muscular contraction, and perhaps by that faculty to which I have alluded above, by which we attend to the relations of *outness*. When we ascend a flight of steps, for instance, we measure several steps with the eye; but, once having got the gauge of them, we go up without looking, measure the distance which we are to raise the foot, even to the sixteenth of an inch, by the sense of contraction of the muscles; and that we measure accurately, is proved when we come to a step that is but a trifle higher or lower than the rest, and which causes us to stumble.

I have tried to ascertain her mode of estimating distance, length, &c., by drawing smooth, hard substances through her hand. When a cane, for instance, is thus drawn through her hand, she says it is long or short, *somewhat* according as it is moved with more or less rapidity, that is, according to the *duration of the impression*; \* but I am inclined to think she gets some idea of the rapidity of the motion even of the smoothest substances, and modifies her judgment thereby.

I have tried to excite the dormant senses, or to create impressions upon the brain, which resemble sensations, by electricity and galvanism, but with only partial success. When a galvanic circuit is made by pressing one piece of metal against the mucous membrane of the nose, and another against the tongue, the nerves of taste are affected, and she says it is like medicine.

The subject of dreaming has been carefully attended to, with a view of ascertaining whether there is any spontaneous activity of the brain, or any part of it, which would give her sensations resembling those arising from the action of light, sound, &c., upon other persons; but there seems no reason to think there is any. Her dreams, as it seems to me, are only the spontaneous reproduction of her sensations while awake, (whether preceded or accompanied by any cerebral action, cannot be known.) She often relates her dreams, and says, she "*dreamed to talk*" with a person, "*to walk with one*," &c.; if asked whether she talked with her mouth, she says, "*No*," very emphatically, "*I do not dream to talk with mouth; I dream to talk with fingers*." Neither does she ever dream of *seeing* persons, but only of meeting them in her usual way. She came to me, the other morning, with a disturbed look,

\* Brown seems satisfied with the explanation of many similar phenomena,—that we judge of length by the duration *in time* of successive sensations; but he only gets us down from the elephant to the tortoise; for he is by no means successful in explaining how we get an idea of lapse of time.

and said, "*I cried much in the night because I did dream you said good bye to go away over the water.*" In a word, her dreams seem, as ours do, to be the spontaneous reproduction of waking sensations, without order or congruity, because uncontrolled by the will.

Experiments have been tried, so far as they were deemed perfectly innocent and unobjectionable, to ascertain whether strong magnets, magnetic tractors, or animal magnetism, have any effect upon her, but without any apparent result. These are all the physical phenomena which now occur to me as worthy of note.

In the development of her intellectual powers, and in the acquisition of knowledge, not only of language, but of external things, and their relations, I think she has made great progress. The principal labor has, of course, been upon the mere vehicle for thought,—language; and if, as has been remarked, it is well for children that they do not know what a task is before them when they begin to learn language,—for their hearts would sink within them at the thought of forty thousand unknown signs of unknown things which they are to learn,—how much more strongly does the remark apply to Laura! They hear these words on every side, at every moment, and learn them without effort; they see them in books, and every day, scores of them are recorded in their minds: the mountain of their difficulty vanishes fast, and they finish their labor, thinking, in the innocence of their hearts, that it is only play; but she, poor thing! in darkness and silence must attack her mountain, and weigh and measure every grain of which it is composed; and it is a rebuke to those who find so many lions in the path of knowledge, to see how incessantly and devotedly she labors on from morn till night of every day, and laughs as if her task were the pleasantest thing in the world.

But I shall best show to what extent she is acquainted with language, by giving some of her conversations which have been recorded during the last year. She can now converse with any person who knows how to make the letters of the manual alphabet for mutes. Most of the members of our large household, and many of our friends, can do this, so that she has a pretty wide circle of acquaintances. She can read understandingly in very simple introductory books for the blind; and she takes delight in doing so, provided some one is near her to explain the new words, for she will never, as children are often allowed to do, pass over a new word, and guess the meaning from the others, but she is very uneasy, and runs round, shaking her hands until she finds some one to explain it. Discoursing one day with her teacher about animals, she asked, "*Why do dog not live with pig?*" Being told pigs lived in a sty, and were dirty, while dogs loved to be clean, she asked, "*What do make dog clean? When he has washed him, where do he wipe?—on grass?*" She is very curious to know all about animals, and it is necessary to satisfy her upon every point. A hundred conversations like the following might be recorded. After hearing some account of worms, she said, "*Has your mother got some worms?*" No, worms do not live in the house. "*Why?*" They live out of doors, that they may get things to eat. "*And to play? Did you see worm?*" Yes. "*Had he eyes?*" Yes. "*Had he ears?*" I did not see any. "*Had he think?*" (touching her forehead.) No. "*Does he breathe?*" Yes. "*Much?*" (at the same time putting her hand on



her chest, and breathing hard.) No. "(Not) *when he is tired?*" Not very hard. "*Do worm know you? is he afraid when hens eat him?*"

After a visit to a barn, she asked many questions, as, "*Can cow push horse with horns? do horse and cow sleep in barn? do horse sit up late?*" Told her that horses did not sit up. She laughed, and said, "*Do horses stand up late?*"

One day her lesson was upon the materials of which knives are made; being told that the handles were of horn, she became very much interested in learning all about horns, their dimensions, use, &c. &c. "*Why do cows have horns?*" said she. To keep bad cows off when they trouble them. "*Do bad cows know to go away when good cow pushes them?*" After sitting some time in thought, she asked, "*Why do cows have two horns? to push two cows?*" moving her hands in the direction in which she supposed the cows would go when pushed.

Her curiosity is insatiable, and by the cheerful toil and patient labor with which she gleans her scanty harvest of knowledge, she reproves those who having eyes see not, and having ears hear not.

She one day found a blank notice printed in raised letters, running thus:—"Sir, there will be a meeting of trustees, &c. Yrs., respectfully," &c. She ran eagerly to her teacher, saying, "*What is SIR, what is TRUSTEES, what is RESPECTFULLY, what is YRS.?*" The journal says, "I defined *sir* and *yours*; she received my explanation of *sir* without comment; and when I told her *yrs.* meant *yours*, she remarked, '*Like thine.*' I could not decide how to explain *respectfully*, but told her she must wait till after dinner. After more thought, I decided it was not best for me to attempt it;\* I would teach her when she was tall, or she might ask the doctor. She seemed very sad, and said, '*I will ask doctor, for I must know.*'"

When I had been absent from home a month, she was told I should be back in a month more; she said, "*Doctor will not come for four weeks; four weeks and four weeks make eight weeks; he is going to make many schools.*" She then asked, "*Will there be deaf boys and girls too in the schools? Will doctor be very tired? Does he stay to take care of many little blind girls?*"

Laura is interested in conversation of a general nature; talking of vacation, she made an unusually long sentence,—"*I must go to Hanover to see my mother; but no, I shall be very weak to go so far; I will go to Halifax if I can go with you. If doctor is gone, I think I will go with Jennette;† if doctor is at home, I cannot go, because he does not like to be left alone; and if Jennette is gone, he cannot mend his clothes and fix‡ all things alone.*"

I commend this sentence, involving as it does, assertion, negation, time, condition, number, &c., to the attention of those who doubt whether Laura can have a correct notion of language; and especially to the director of a Western State School for the Deaf Mutes, who took pains in a public lecture to say, that it was impossible for her to conceive the force of the word *if* in a complicated sentence. He considers much

\* This teacher had but recently commenced with her.

† My sister.

‡ It may be remarked here generally, that her teachers are not responsible for the correctness of all the words she uses, since recently she has begun to learn some general conversation.

of what is told about her as savoring of "*humbug*," and says of it, to use his own tasteful phrase, "Tell this to the marines; the sailors won't believe it."

Let him read the above sentence, and if he still thinks Laura talks like a parrot, let him come and see her, and watch her beaming and changing countenance as the sentences fall from her fingers,\* and he will be as glad to retract his uncharitable sentiment, as I shall be to forget the discourteous form in which he uttered it.

If this dear child's life should be spared, not only will she be able to comprehend sentences such as he has selected, but to do what is more important,—she will furnish argument stronger than cold philosophy can bring to refute materialism, and to assert the native power of the human soul which can struggle up against such obstacles, and from such utter darkness, until it sports joyously in the light of knowledge. She has kept a little diary during the last year, and written down an account of what she has done, learned, or said, during the day. She writes a legible hand, and some of her remarks are very interesting.

She is fond of writing letters; and the following, which is entirely of her own composition, will give an idea of her style:—

"Dear Mrs. Morton,—I was glad to have letter from you. You were very good to write to me. I want you to write to me soon. Miss Rogers sends her love to you very much. I send love and kiss to you. I am well now. Miss Rogers and Swift are very well. Oliver can talk fast than me do. Laurena is very much better now; she will have standing stool to walk in if she can learn good. Dr. Howe went away and came again. Miss Pilly is sick in her head bad. I do not forget to think of you many times. I walk in street all day to make me well and strong. Miss J— sends her love to you. I told Caroline to come and see you; she would come with me soon in vacation to see you long. All girls and dolls are well. I will write to you again soon. I want to see you very much. I came to Halifax to see you with Miss J. and Swift. I was very glad to know in new words. I do read in books. Miss Rogers teach me about it. Oliver knows all things good. J— bought new two handkerchiefs for me, and she was good. Good by.

LAURA BRIDGMAN."

The following extracts will show her idea about the seat of sensation. "During the lesson to-day, Laura stopped suddenly, and holding her forehead, said, '*I think very hard; was I baby did I think?*' meaning, when I was a baby did I think, &c.

"Again, Laura came to me to-day, saying, '*Doctor will come in fourteen days, I think in my head.*' Asked her if she did not think in her side and heart. '*No,*' said she, '*I cannot think in heart; I think in head.*' Why? '*I cannot know; all little girls cannot know about heart.*'" When she is disappointed, or a friend is sick, and she is at all sad, she says, "*My heart aches; when heart aches, does blood run?*"

\* Where I think the reader would not understand her, I have supplied the word necessary to eke out her meaning, always printing such word, however, in Roman letter, so that any one can know the exact words which she did use.

She had been told about the blood circulating, but supposed that it did so only when she could feel it. "*Does blood run in my eyes? I cannot feel eyes-blood run.*" One day, when probably her brain was fatigued, she said, "*Why cannot I stop\* to think? I cannot help to think all days; do you stop to think? does Harrison stop to think now he is dead?*" This was just after the President's death, an event about which the blind children had talked much among themselves and to Laura. And here, upon giving what seem to me the child's notions about death, it will be proper to remark that they are less curious and valuable to the psychologist than they would have been had she been more completely isolated. Within the last year, she has acquired great facility of conversing with other persons, and of course may have received notions from them. It would have been perfectly easy to isolate her by adopting an arbitrary system of signs, and not teaching it to others; but this would have been great injustice to the child, because the only possible way to make her familiar with language, was constant opportunity of exercising it as fast as she learned it. Now, no teacher could be with her always; and if she could, a teacher cannot be a child, and Laura craved at times the society of children.

Strong, therefore, as was the temptation to improve this rare opportunity of watching the development of mind, (for it seemed like looking at mind with a microscope,) it was not to be listened to a moment, even though a revelation of the whole arcana of thought were to have been the reward.

Great caution, however, has been used with regard to the manner of her intercourse with others, and to the persons also. Latterly she has shown much less desire to be with children than when she could use only a few words, and when she delighted to frolic and romp with them. She will now sit quietly alone by the hour, writing or sewing, and occasionally indulging in a soliloquy, or an imaginary dialogue.

But to return to her notion of death, which leads us rather from the intellectual to the moral part of her nature. The attachment to life is such a strong and universal feeling, that if any thing deserves the name of an innate sense, this certainly does. It acts, however, instinctively and blindly, and, I doubt not, influences Laura's feelings, and causes her to shrink from any thing which may alarm her love of existence by suggesting that it may cease. It appears she had been carried to a funeral, before she came here, though I could never obtain any satisfactory account from any one of the impression it made upon her; indeed, it was impossible then to do any thing more than guess, from her appearance, what was passing in her mind. She can now herself describe the feeling that then agitated her on touching a corpse for the first time. She was acquainted with two little girls, sisters, in Cambridge, Adeline and Elizabeth. Adeline died during the year before last. Not long since, in giving her a lesson in geography, her teacher began to describe Cambridge; the mention of Cambridge called up a new subject, and she asked, "*Did you see Adeline in box?*" I answered, Yes. "*She was very cold, and not smooth; ground made her rough.*" I tried to change

\* Why cannot I cease thinking? I cannot help thinking all the time.



the subject here, but it was in vain; she wished to know how long the box was, &c.; she said, "*Drew told me about Adeline; did she feel? did Elizabeth cry and feel sick? I did not cry, because I did not think much about it.*" She then drew in her hands shudderingly, as if cold. I asked her what was the matter. She said, "*I thought about (how) I was afraid to feel of dead man before I came here, when I was very little girl with my mother; I felt of dead head's eyes and nose; I thought it was man's; I did not know.*" Now, it is impossible that any one could have said any thing to her on the subject; she could not know whether the state the man was in, was temporary or lasting; she knew only that it was a being once moving and breathing like herself, but now confined in a coffin, cold, and still, and stiff,—in a word, in a state which she did not comprehend, but from which nature made her recoil.

During the past year, she all at once refused to eat meat, and, being asked why, she said, "*Because it is dead.*" I pushed the inquiry, and found she had been in the kitchen, and felt of a dead turkey, from which she suddenly recoiled. She continued disinclined to eat meat for some weeks, but gradually she came to her appetite again; and now, although she understands that fowls, sheep, calves, &c., are killed to furnish meat, she eats it with relish.

Thus it appears that, like other human beings, she has that instinctive attachment to life which is necessary to its preservation, and which makes her shrink from any thing that reminds her of its possible extinction, without, nevertheless, its being so strong as seriously to mar her enjoyment.

I mentioned some circumstances in my last report which made me infer her native modesty; and although such a supposition seems to some unphilosophical, I can only say that careful observation during the past year corroborates the opinion then advanced. Nor have I any difficulty in supposing that there is this innate tendency to purity; but on the contrary, think it forms an important and beautiful element of humanity, the natural course of which is towards that state of refinement, in which, while the animal appetites shall work out their own ends, they shall all of them be stripped of their grossness, and, clad in garments of purity, contribute to the perfection of a race made in God's own image.

Laura is still so young, and her physical development is yet so imperfect,—she is so childlike in appearance and action,—that it is impossible to suppose she has as yet any idea of sex; nevertheless, no young lady can be more modest and proper in dress and demeanor than she is. It has been suggested, that, as her father was obliged, when she was young, to coerce her to many things which she was disinclined to do, she may have conceived a fear of every one in man's dress. But, she was much accustomed, from childhood, at home, to the society of a simple, kind-hearted man, who loved her tenderly, and with whom she was perfectly familiar; it was not, therefore, the dress which affected her.

I may add, moreover, that, from the time she came here, she has never been accustomed to be in company with any man but myself; and that I have, in view of the future, very carefully refrained from even those endearing caresses which one naturally bestows upon a child of eight years old, to whom one is tenderly attached. But this will not

account for such facts as the following: during the last year, she received from a lady a present of a beautifully-dressed doll, with a bed, bed-clothes, and chamber furniture of all kinds. Never was a child happier than she was; and a long time passed in examining and admiring the wardrobe and furniture. The washstand was arranged, towels were folded, the bureau was put in place, the linen was deposited in the tiny drawers; at last the bed was nicely made, the pillows smoothed, the top sheet turned trimly over, and the bed half opened, as if coquettishly inviting Miss Dolly to come in; but here Laura began to hesitate, and kept coming to my chair to see if I was still in the room, and going away again, laughing, when she found me. At last I went out, and as soon as she perceived the jar of the shutting door, she commenced undressing the doll, and putting it to bed, eagerly desiring her teacher, (a lady,) to admire the operation.

She, as I said, is not familiarly acquainted with any man but myself. When she meets with one, she shrinks back coyly; though if it be a lady, she is familiar, and will receive and return caresses; nevertheless, she has no manner of fear or awe of me. She plays with me as she would with a girl. Hardly a day passes without a game at romps between us; yet never, even by inadvertence, does she transgress the most scrupulous propriety, and would as instinctively and promptly correct any derangement of her dress, as a girl of fourteen trained to the strictest decorum. Perceiving, one day, that I kissed a little girl much younger than herself, she noticed it, and stood thinking a moment, and then asked me gravely, "Why did you kiss Rebecca?" and some hours after, she asked the same question again.

She had heard much about little Oliver Caswell, the deaf and blind boy, before he came, and was very desirous to know him. During their first interview, after she became a little familiar and playful, she suddenly snatched a kiss,—but drew back as quick as lightning, and by the expression of her countenance, and a little confusion of manner, showed that by a hasty impulse she had done something of the propriety of which she was doubtful. This is the only instance in which I have known her to show the sense of shame, or to have any occasion to do so, even if this can be considered as one.

The development of her moral nature during the past year has been such as her previous sweetness of temper, benevolence, and truthfulness, led me to expect. The different traits of character have unfolded themselves successively, as pure and spotless as the petals of a rose; and in every action uninfluenced by extraneous influence, she "gravitates towards the right" as naturally as a stone falls to the ground.\*

I will give some extracts from my diary showing her conscientiousness.

[To be continued.]

Two or three instances are recorded in her teacher's journal of apparent unkindness on Laura's part to other children, and one instance of some ill temper to a grown person; but so contradictory are they to the whole tenor of her character and conduct, that I must infer either a misunderstanding of her motives by others, or ill-judged conduct on their part.

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